

Overcoming reopening fear and worry about COVID-19



Overcoming fear and worry about COVID-19 as you resume your previous activities and social interactions

Experiencing anxiety in response to your community reopening is certainly an expected reaction for many if not all of us during the COVID-19 pandemic as we start to resume normal activities. Focus on the facts and listen to your feelings. Make decisions on you and your family's level of comfort together with your overall interpretation of the facts about safety and well-being.

As you venture out again, ask yourself, "Have I done everything I can to protect myself and others around me?" Even if you can't control what others do, you can gain a sense of control and confidence in your own actions.

How can I manage stress and anxiety related to reopening?

As the community progresses through the phases of reopening, it will create opportunities for you to re-engage socially in a natural and gradual way, which may help to reduce your anxiety.

If you still feel nervous about resuming your normal activities, here are tips that may help:

Focus on facts: Focusing on the facts can help you make informed decisions as you resume normal activities. Make sure you're getting your COVID-19 information and recommendations from trusted sources, such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), your state and local health departments, and hospitals and healthcare systems in your area.

Learn about safety measures: Find out about the health and safety measures that businesses, hospitals, and medical offices in your community are taking to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Many have implemented new infection prevention protocols, including screening, enhanced cleaning/disinfecting, personal protective equipment (PPE), and check-in/check-out procedures designed to help protect patients and staff.

Follow your feelings: Just because your community is starting to reopen doesn't necessarily mean you'll feel ready to resume your normal activities right away. Make decisions based on how you feel and your interpretation of the facts. If you choose to be more cautious because you're part of a high-risk group — or for any other reason — it's reasonable to wait to see how reopening goes before resuming activities in public.

Understand the risks: It's important to understand your personal and community risk factors and accept responsibility for the risk you choose to take on. And remember, nothing in life is without risk, it's just a part of living.

How do I overcome anxiety about reopening?

Overcoming anxiety boils down to facing your fear and learning to deal with it. How you accomplish this goal depends on your personal preferences.

It's likely that COVID-19 will be with us for a while. Most of us will eventually get used to the changes brought about by COVID-19, such as wearing masks and social distancing, and become more comfortable living with some degree of risk related to the virus. Although you should remain vigilant to protect yourself and your loved ones, your anxiety around COVID-19 will likely diminish over time.

What are normal reactions to reopening?

You may experience a wide range of reactions to reopening, from being very anxious and overly cautious to being thrilled to resume normal activities.

Anxiety is a normal feeling and happens for a reason — it helps you stay alert and determine your level of risk.

What if I'm worried about other people's behavior during reopening?

It can be easy to get caught up in what other people are doing during reopening, especially if people aren't wearing masks or are gathering in large groups. It also can be tempting to criticize people who are quick to resume normal social interactions and activities. It's important to remember that you can't control what other people do, only what you decide to do. So continue to follow CDC and state guidelines and weigh the benefits and risks of your activities for yourself and your family.

Despite this challenging time, many positives have emerged, such as the outpouring of care and support for each other and the realization that we're stronger together. This is still true now as we reopen. Consider the impact your actions have on others as we resume normal activities in order to keep not only yourself and loved ones but others safe too.

Experiencing anxiety related to reopening during COVID-19 is normal. It's possible to overcome your anxiety by focusing on the facts, following your feelings, understanding the risks, and learning about safety measure.

For additional guidance, contact our **Employee and Family Assistance Program (EAP)** team. This is a free, confidential service to help counsel our team members and resolve problems that have an impact on their work and/or home life. **Call (877) 327-4968** to make an appointment.